

Activity 11.2 Early Childhood Education Innovation Fund Race to the Top Final Report

1 SUCCESSES

The Early Childhood Education Innovation Fund was a two phase project. This project was designed to promote innovative activities in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs at community colleges to increase access and success for aspiring ECE teachers as well as promote early literacy.

Phase I

Eight colleges were awarded subgrants through this activity in phase I. Each of the colleges accomplished their goals by the end of the grant period. These successes include:

- **Blue Ridge Community College**
 - Expanded bi-lingual books available for students, collaborated with developmental instructors to co-teach entry level coursework (DRE and EDU 119), Spanish version of EDU 119 was created and offered online
- **Craven Community College**
 - Created online course content/videos to support content delivery; Expanded access to Foundations
- **Durham Technical Community College**
 - Customized EDU 119 and co-req ACA 122 with English as a second language infused content
- **Gaston College**
 - Remediation modules created for EDU 119. Writing Center expanded services for students in this course.
- **Haywood Community College**
 - Expanded course integration and access for DRE, ACA and EDU 119; DRE courses now directly connected to EDU 119
- **Stanly Community College**
 - Created learning communities for early childhood students. These communities functioned like cohorts with students taking EDU 119, two developmental reading courses, and an ACA 090 Study skills course.
- **Wake Technical Community College**
 - Hired a bi-lingual instructor and expanded access to ESL courses - EDU 119, 153, 131, and 144

- **Wayne Community College**
 - Expanded access to EDU 119, EDU 131, EDU 146, and EDU 153; Created weekend cohorts for students to support community need for course access outside of weekday/online offerings

Phase II

In phase II, Blue Ridge Community College was awarded a subgrant to complete the Growing Greatness Project. This project had four main objectives, all of which were accomplished by the end of the grant period. The four main objectives of Growing Greatness were:

- Objective 1 - Incorporate an explicit & intentional emphasis on and alignment with Foundations and NC formative assessments to embed in NC ECE course work.
- Objective 2 - Provide a sequence of professional development for NC ECE faculty to support the use of current evidence-based content and methods in coursework and programs.
- Objective 3 - Update the program of study to support enhanced career pathways for ECE professionals.
- Objective 4 - Increase pathways for ECE professionals through articulation and collaboration.

Major accomplishments of Growing Greatness

- Growing Greatness faculty partnered with NC CCR&R to distribute the updated Foundations document to Community College EC degree programs.
- The team provided ECE faculty with a link to Foundations to post on department websites.
- All courses have been reviewed, course descriptions have been changed if needed, and student learning outcomes have been written or revised
- Courses are now aligned with NAEYC Standards, B-K standards, NC Professional Teaching Standards, INTASC standards, and DEC recommendations
- A copy of Careers in Early Childhood, a North Carolina Directory 2015 edition was provided to each college along with an electronic link to the document. This document is to be used to support career exploration.
- Professional development was provided for faculty on the following topics:
 - CTE Career Pathways
 - Intensive Behavior Strategies in Foundations
 - Health Expectations in Child Care Centers
 - Evidence based practices to enhance activities and assignment resources
 - NC Early Childhood Teacher Assessment Tool
 - Articulation

- Formative assessment in outdoor education
- Growing Greatness faculty worked with the Articulation Leadership Team and the Articulation Director hired by Child Care Services Association to expand opportunities for articulation.
- The team created a chart of EDU courses that articulate to BK programs.
- The team also engaged in discussions with NCCCS and high school articulation partners to ensure connections to ECE degree opportunities (CCP).
- Engaged ECE partners in discussions about increasing the use of college credits across systems and strategies (Ed2Career Summits).
- A focus group of business partners held online with employers.
- Growing Greatness faculty worked to create textbook free course content.
- The team worked to expand accessibility (ADA compliance) with online course access by providing closed captioning for video resources.
- Growing Greatness faculty reached out to Head Start partners and identified strategies to support their needs for workforce access to CDA credits and degrees.
- All core courses now have Foundations and Formative Assessment imbedded content.

2 CHALLENGES

Phase I

Student life issues were reported as challenges by many of the participating colleges. Though new programs and course options were available via the grant, students often could not participate or stopped participating due to challenges such as family issues, employment issues, etc. Additionally, Wake Technical Community College reported that it was challenging to find a qualified bi-lingual instructor.

Phase II

Articulation work was challenging. Universities were willing to meet with college representatives to discuss articulation. However, it was challenging to negotiate meaningful articulation agreements with limited opportunities for transfer of EDU coursework. It was common for EDU courses to be seen as electives instead of specific lower division courses for the university(s).

3 LESSONS LEARNED/INNOVATIONS

Phase I

All of the participating colleges from phase I reported success in alternative course scheduling options for programs. This included cohorts, learning communities, and weekend college options. Online courses continued to be a strong option for students. Resources such as videos

and other materials developed with the grant resources provided additional support for online students.

Another innovation that proved to be successful was the pairing of developmental modules and/or English as a second language (ESL) content with curriculum courses. Students enrolled in courses which required developmental modules or included ESL content were more successful than students who were only enrolled in curriculum courses with no additional support.

Phase II

The biggest lesson learned in this project was teamwork and collaboration is the key to success. All colleges participated in the work. Teams were seamless in the delivery of grant objectives and often worked with outside agencies to ensure the work of the grant was relevant to employers and the community. Additionally, relationships were strengthened by the work of the grant and the work with our K-12 partners.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Phase I

Early childhood students who are English language learners need additional supports in order to be successful in curriculum courses. Developmental content and ESL content should be embedded wherever possible in entry level curriculum courses. Colleges should work with their academic support center to collaborate throughout the semester. Colleges who serve a large ESL population should consider hiring a bi-lingual instructor. Alternative course schedule options should be considered. Cohort modules and learning communities should be considered whenever possible.

Phase II

Faculty work will continue after the grant ends to infuse technology into all core courses. Professional development needs for faculty will continue after the grant ends. NC ACCESS (the early childhood faculty association for community colleges) will plan and offer professional development to support and reinforce the content developed through Growing Greatness. NCCCS will continue to work with NAEYC on a research project to expand accreditation and articulation opportunities within the state.

Collaboration will be the key to future work on articulation and on career pathways. Colleges should continue to work with university partners to negotiate meaningful articulation agreements. Additionally, colleges should work closely with NAEYC to find ways to connect and leverage accreditation for articulation opportunities. Collaboration should continue with K-12 partners to develop and sustain meaningful CTE pathways through Career and College Promise.

5 FINAL THOUGHTS

The North Carolina Community College System appreciated the opportunity to participate in this Race to the Top project. Our colleges and students will benefit for years to come due to the work that was completed and supported by this grant.